

**Mark Spicer and John Covach, eds. 2010. *Sounding Out Pop: Analytical Essays in Popular Music*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. ix, 265 pp. ISBN 978-0-472-03400-0**

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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Mark Spicer and John Covach, eds. 2010. *Sounding Out Pop: Analytical Essays in Popular Music*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. ix, 265 pp. ISBN 978-0-472-03400-0.

Mark Spicer and John Covach's edited collection *Sounding Out Pop: Analytical Essays in Popular Music* is a welcome addition to the literature of popular music analysis. The essays in this collection, the fourth volume in University of Michigan Press's Tracking Pop Series, are expanded versions of papers presented at conferences in North America, commissioned by the editors. They delve into style, form, vocal composition, narrative voice, and musical identity (or persona) through a variety of music-analytic and historical approaches. As observed in the collection's preface, despite the mention of analysis in the book's subtitle, the authors consider the contexts surrounding the music explored in their essays, including gender, politics, and sexuality.

Rather than grouping the essays by subject of theme (as I do here), the studies are presented in chronological order by repertoire from R&B in the 1950s to Radiohead in the 2000s. This organizational scheme maps the changing sounds of popular music in the twentieth century, highlighting the stylistic and analytic issues that emerged in the academic discourse that surrounded it. The unfortunate side effect of this organizational scheme, however, is that it enhances genre gaps in the book—grunge, metal, hip-hop, and country, for example, genres that have not received adequate attention in musicological and music-theoretic literature. And while it is impossible to offer a comprehensive collection, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the obvious gender imbalance, as only one essay focuses on music by women.

A musician's persona is characterized in large part by specific stylistic elements that contribute to the development of a their musical voice and identity. Albin Zak offers the first of two considerations of elements of vocal style, tracing the development of Roy Orbison's singing on his early recordings with Norman Petty to his first hit single "Only the Lonely." Zak's thoughtful analyses offer the first account of Orbison's elastic metric sensibility, detailing how the singer drops and adds beats to elaborate the unfolding narrative drama. Yet, while his interpretation of Orbison's song as a "metaphoric portrait" of the desolate loneliness of his West Texas home is provocative, Zak might reconsider the importance of the "Nashville Sound" era, which was in full bloom at the time of the recording. Since, as Zak's article suggests, Orbison found his musical style with the support of Nashville's A-Team, perhaps "Only the Lonely" had more to do with influence of the musical scene surrounding him than his West Texas roots. In his essay on Marvin Gaye's creative process, Andrew Flory reveals that "vocal composition" was integral to the singer's creative process. Against the backdrop of the "assembly-line" Motown production style, the author contextualizes his analyses within the professional and personal issues occurring in Gaye's life, showing how music became his vehicle for negotiating these mounting tensions. To examine Gaye's in-studio composition progress, Flory compares final recorded tracks with demonstration recordings

of songs like “Let’s Get It On,” mapping the genesis of each song and the ways in which they were sexualized from one take to the next by continually embellishing lyrics, phrase length, and structure.

Drawing on neo-Riemannian theory in his examination of stylistic elements of harmonic language, Kevin Holm-Hudson’s essay analyzes the “maximally smooth chromatic voice leading” in the music of the band Genesis. As the author observes, the incorporation of neo-Riemannian theory is not new to popular music analysis (see Capuzzo 2004), but Holm-Hudson’s is the first to use this analytic technique to explore the development of a band’s musical language. As his analyses reveal, Genesis’s music, and Tony Banks’s compositional practices in particular, is marked by highly chromatic voice leading (reminiscent of Romantic era composers), in which emphasis is placed on linear movement between voices in a chord; see especially his analysis of “Seven Stones” (106–09). Neo-Riemannian theory proves an invaluable lens for a study of harmonic musical language in progressive-rock bands.

Stylistic identity emerges as the important theme in James Grier’s exploration of Roger McGuinn’s interpretations of Bob Dylan’s song, both with The Byrds and solo projects. The illuminating analyses in this study show that McGuinn and The Byrds adopted several strategies in their reinterpretations of Dylan’s songs, including converting Dylan’s songs from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to duple metre, altering harmony, or turning verses into bridges, enabling them to maintain their musical voice and identity. However, after carefully and indeed expertly outlining the ways in which McGuinn sought to maintain his *own* musical voice in his covers, Grier reads McGuinn’s first solo project (“I’m So Restless”) as an adoption of a Dylanesque persona, arguing that the singer sounded “more Dylan than Dylan” (57). Since the troubadour persona was present only in this one song, it seems that Grier might have considered this song as McGuinn’s tribute to a musical icon, rather than further submerging himself in the Dylan persona.

As Mark Spicer observes, defining style remains a challenging issue in popular music studies, notably because an artist’s style rarely fits squarely within the boundaries of one style (124). For Spicer, the notion of stylistic eclecticism is perhaps more useful when trying to define the musical style of artists whose music does not fit neatly into one style box. In his exploration of the Police’s musical style, Spicer draws on Leonard Ratner’s (1980) theory of style topics to define the band’s eclectic musical language. His analyses show that their music cannot simply be defined “white reggae,” but rather as an integration of style topics drawn from a range of musical influences. He adapts Kofi Agawu’s concept of the “universe of topics” from his *Playing with Signs* (1991) to create “a universe of style,” placing reggae as the central planet amongst nine musical styles from which the Police drew musical influence, which allowed Spicer to demonstrate a new way of thinking about stylistically diverse music. An excellent companion to Spicer’s study, Rebecca Leydon’s essay also draws on Ratner’s (1980) theory of style topics for her examination of Beck and Mr. Bungle’s poly-stylistic sampling aesthetics. Unlike digital sampling, Beck and Mr. Bungle’s music consists of newly composed stylistic fragments that allude

to objects or events, such as music boxes and carnivals. Leydon defines each fragment (as style topic) and then considers how it functions as a thematized component that is moulded into a song's formal architecture (see especially her analysis of Mr. Bungle's "Golem II" [203–09]). These essays are highlights of the collection, groundbreaking studies that are sure to influence many popular music scholars.

The overarching theme explored in the final three essays concerns musical narrative: from song form to expressive narrative strategies and the deconstruction of concept album narrative. John Covach's essay opens the book with a brief discussion of Lieber and Stoller and The Coaster's relationship in the 1950s. The heart of the article lies in their collaboration and the development of the Playlet form. His analyses of form and lyrics in Lieber and Stoller songs ("Down in Mexico" and "Little Egypt") reveal a progression towards what he calls a "dramatic AABA" form, a rhetorical structure in which the Bridge (B section) of the song narrative is elevated both musically and lyrically so that it becomes the climax of the song, leaving the final A section to function as an epilogue to the narrative drama.

Drawing on the feminist theory of narrative voice and authority (Chatman 1980; Sniader Lanser 1981, 1992), Burns introduces an analytic model for lyrical narratives and then considers how aspects of musical expression and vocal gestures suggest extra-musical connotations or convey emotions. Burns then systematically applies this model to songs by Tori Amos, PJ Harvey, Ani DiFranco, and Alanis Morissette, offering examples of how it could inform one's analytic process. Although methodologically demanding, Burns's analytic framework will prove valuable to analysts, as it is indeed adaptable to a variety of popular music styles and even to visual domains of popular music such as music videos or live concerts.

In the final contribution in this book, Marianne Tatom Letts introduces the idea of the "resistant" concept album in her analysis of Radiohead's album *Kid A*. Unlike concept albums that develop a narrative or theme, a "resistant" concept album subverts the parameters of a concept album "while still projecting some kind of overarching concept" (215–16). Letts's contextual analysis positions Radiohead as a band discontented with media labelling their previous album as a "concept album," revealing that they are not only resistant of the concept album form, but also popular media's reception of their music. Despite their resistance, Letts's analysis reveals large-scale key association in the song sequence, and stylistic and lyrical clues that lead her to read the over-arching concept of *Kid A* as a hopeless, self-negating subject struggling with life.

*Sounding Out Pop* offers insightful and illuminating readings of popular music and presents a variety of analytic tools for considering the sound of music to the reader. Spicer and Covach should be applauded for this significant contribution to popular music studies, one that scholars, students, and enthusiasts will enjoy reading.

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*Analytical Approaches to World Music* 1, no. 1. <http://aawmjournal.com/>.

The journal *Analytical Approaches to World Music* begs an explication of what is implicit in its title. While what is meant by *world music* has become largely self-evident, *analytical approaches* is less so. My first response of course was to wonder who was practising non-analytical approaches to world music. But given the high-profile scholars on this new journal's editorial and advisory boards, *analytical* must suggest something more than the act of analysis.

The journal is an extension of the First International Conference on Analytical Approaches to World Music (AAWM) held at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst in February 2010. The conference brought together music theorists, ethnomusicologists, musicologists, cognitive psychologists, computer scientists, and mathematicians to explore new and novel approaches to the analytical study of world music. The excitement they generated spilled out onto the electronic pages of a new organ, the AAWM online journal. This premiere issue was published in 2011 and includes a welcome introduction from editors Lawrence Shuster and Rob Schultz, along with six diverse and challenging articles.

Perhaps analytical in this context is related to the *way* music scholarship is practised. Ethnomusicology, borrowing as it has from anthropological studies and using ethnography as a tool, has not spent as much time as some would like delving into the musicological questions presented by many of the world's musical systems. Some may suggest that ethnomusicology has become context driven at the cost of musicological inquiry. Perhaps *analytical* also suggests a musicological intervention into ethnomusicology and this journal as an opportunity to reimagine the relationship between ethnomusicology, musicology, and music theory—making a collective musicological project to document the *ethnosphere*.